



# THIS WEEK IN IRAQ

The Newsletter of the Multi-National Force - Iraq

www.mnf-iraq.com

June 27, 2006

## Top Stories



Iraqi divisions control more area,

Page 3

Bulgarians take security role,

Page 7



Coalition, Iraqi raids net insurgents,

Page 8



Iran factor 'quite complex',

Page 11



Al Muthanna Provincial Council Chairman Sheikh Asaad Abdul Amir Al Duainei, left, Governor Mohammed-Ali Hassan Abbas al Hassani, and U.S. Air Force Brig Gen. Thomas B. Wright ready for a press conference in Samawah, Iraq Thursday.

## Iraqis take over province

Story and photo Jim Garamone  
American Forces Press Service

**SAMAWAH** – Muthanna is the country's first province to be responsible for its own security since the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi officials said Thursday.

U. S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Thomas B. Wright, the chief of strategic communications under strategic effects, congratulated the province's governor and his people on their accomplishment during a trip to the province's capital.

"Your promise and the promise of the people who live in this province represent the vision of unity, security and prosperity for which not only the people of Iraq are with you, but the people of the world are behind you," Wright said during a news conference at the governor's house.

"On this occasion, I'd like to thank God for this gift and our people in this province — all our families, all our tribes, all our sheikhs, all our educated people and all our young people who stood with us, ... and the people who sacrifice - the police and the army - for us," Gov.

Mohammed-Ali Hassan Abbas al-Hassani said.

"This is what we've been striving for since we got here," said British Army Col. Giles Vosper-Brown, the commander of coalition troops in the province. Iraqi Police and Soldiers have been handling all the security and emergency calls in the province for the last four months.

On June 19, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki announced the withdrawal of all Coalition troops from the province. This includes British, Australian and Japanese troops. Japanese Self-Defense Force engineers will redeploy home. British and Australian troops will redeploy out of the province to other areas in Iraq.

Vosper-Brown said the Coalition will maintain close communications with Iraqi security forces in the province and can help if needed. But, he said, he believes the Iraqis can handle any eventuality.

Under Saddam Hussein, the province was totally ignored. Since arriving in

See *Future*, Page 4

**GENERAL CASEY'S CORNER****Capitalizing on success**

The Iraqi government, with a complete security cabinet, is now standing on its own. The seating of a government based on national unity was a critical precursor for future success. In cooperation with the Iraqi government, we now have an opportunity to capitalize on recent successes afforded by the seating of the new government and the death of al-Qaida in Iraq's Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, laying the foundation for future prosperity in Iraq.

This month about 2,500 Iraqis are being released throughout Iraq as a visible symbol of national unity and reconciliation. Baghdad security is steadily improving as a result of operation Amaliya Ma'am Ila al-Amam, Together Forward, which started in mid-June. And provincial Iraqi control of Muthanna is set for this July. All of these demonstrate a real and tangible beginning to a new phase in Iraq's history.

Violence is not widespread in Iraq. Fourteen of the 18 provinces, which have 63 percent of the population, experience less than nine attacks per day. Violence is centered in a 30-mile

By Gen. George W. Casey Jr.  
Multi-National Force - Iraq



**"Al-Qaida in Iraq forces are significantly hurt, and the elected Iraqi government ... is making a strong stand."**

radius around Baghdad. Eleven of those 14 provinces have less than one attack per day. While violence is still at unacceptable levels, it is declining when compared to the week following the Samarra mosque bombing.

However, violence and troop reductions alone are not an accurate measure of success in Iraq. We have achieved great progress with the Iraqi security forces and have 265,000 military and police. This translates to three divisions, 18 brigades and 69 battalions in the fight now. By the end of this summer,

75 percent of the Iraqi Army brigades will be in the lead. Ninety percent of the divisions will be in the lead by the end of the year.

Another positive sign of progress is the upcoming transfer of the Muthanna province to Iraqi control. Muthanna will be the first of the 18 provinces to assume full security responsibility. Achieving this is an involved process

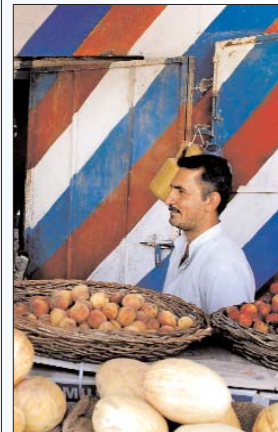
that shows Iraqi success in developing the government and security forces. As always, the Coalition stands by to assist, but the first line of defense for emergencies in the province will

be the Iraqi security forces.

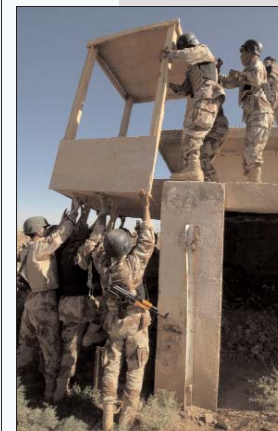
Al-Qaida in Iraq forces are significantly hurt, and the elected Iraqi government headed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is making a strong stand and representing the Iraqi people - not sectarian agendas. Operation Amaliya Ma'am Ila al-Amam is succeeding in making Baghdad safer. Iraqis are increasingly taking control of their country as evidenced by the upcoming transfer of the Muthanna province. We are well postured to make 2006 a decisive year in Iraq.

**Unity, Prosperity, Security**

Iraqi children swarm a Polish soldier as he hands out T-shirts, water, and comic books on June 14.



A shop owner in Samarra sells fruit from his roadside stand on June 18.



Iraqi Soldiers from the 9th Iraqi Army Division build a guard tower at a training compound at Camp Taji on June 13.

**GENERAL CASEY'S CORNER**



# Iraqi division gets northern Baghdad



Soldiers from the 9th Iraqi Army Division march during a ceremony at Camp Taji on June 19.

**Story and photo**  
by Spc. C. Terrell Turner  
*Multi-National Division - Baghdad Public Affairs*

**CAMP TAJI** — Multi-National Division - Baghdad transferred authority for a major portion of north Baghdad Province to the 9th Iraqi Army Division during an 'Iraqis in the Lead' ceremony on June 19.

U.S. Army Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman, the commanding general of Multi-National Division - Baghdad, spoke about the readiness of the 9th Iraqi Army Division before transferring responsibility for more than 380 square miles to Maj. Gen. Mahmoud Bashar,

the commander of the 9th Iraqi Army Division.

"I've seen the 9th Iraqi Army (Division) grow in skill, capabilities and confidence into a highly proficient, effective fighting force," said Thurman. "They have never failed nor waived in any mission. They have earned the confidence of the Iraqi people."

The Iraqi division can still call on the American troops if needed, but it is largely on its own.

"We are taking control as a division ... but we are not working alone. We will be work-

ing with (Maj.) Gen. Thurman," Bashar said.

The Iraqi division is the second to take the lead in Baghdad.

Bashar said he sees all of his Soldiers working together as "one" to provide for the security of Iraq.

"My Soldiers come from all over Iraq and know how to deal with different situations," he said. "They can all do the same tasks and have the same feelings towards the Iraqi people. Iraq is first, everything else is second. This is a great day for me and my Soldiers - and I think it's a great day for the new Iraqi Army."

## Ready Iraqi battalion to secure area

**Story and Photo by Spc. Rich Vogt**  
*138th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

**TAL AFAR** — On June 1 the Iraqi Army's 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 3rd Iraqi Army Division became the third Iraqi battalion to secure a region in

western Ninawa Province.

A transfer of authority ceremony was held at the 3rd Iraqi Army Headquarters in Tal Afar that day.

The event marked assumption of security for a portion of territory near the base.

"The courageous men of this battalion have pledged to God, the people and the country to continue to pursue terrorists and destroy them and to further peace and prosperity in our area of operation in all Iraq's cities," said the commanding officer of the 1st Brigade.

The battalion marched past the

reviewing stand and a motorcade of military vehicles rumbled across the parade field.

Attending the ceremony were military and civilian leaders as well as prominent members of the community.

According to leaders of the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, the battalion is now fully responsible for counterinsurgency operations in the area, and for the safety and security of the Iraqi people.

"Each of you has made a very brave and courageous choice to serve your nation during this turbulent rebuilding period," said Col. John Norris, commander of 4th Bn., 23rd Infantry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

"I applaud your leadership, your courage, your sacrifice, and know your leadership and commitment will enable the Iraqi citizens to enjoy a free and democratic Iraq."



Soldiers from the 3rd Iraqi Army Division march during a ceremony in Tal Afar on June 1.

**MNF-I Commanding General**

Gen. George W. Casey Jr.

**MNF-I Deputy Chief of Staff Strategic Effects**

Maj. Gen.

William B. Caldwell IV

**MNF-I Strategic Effects Communications Division Chief**

Brig. Gen. Thomas B. Wright

**Combined Press Information Center Director**

Lt. Col. Barry A. Johnson

barry.johnson@iraq.centcom.mil

**124th Mobile Public Affairs Commander**

Maj. Christopher D. Dockery

**Media Outreach Chief**

Capt. Bradford E. Leighton

bradford.leighton@iraq.centcom.mil

**Media Outreach Team Leader**

1st Lt. Russell G. Yauney

russell.yauney@iraq.centcom.mil

**MNF-I Web Content Manager**

Sgt. Jeffrey M. Lowry

jeff.lowry@iraq.centcom.mil

**Technical Manager**

Sgt. Trevor L. Snyder

**Editor**

Staff Sgt. James Sherrill

james.sherrill@iraq.centcom.mil

**Senior Staff Writer**

Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher

*This Week in Iraq* is an authorized publication produced by Multi-National Force - Iraq. Contents are not the official views of the U.S. Government or DoD. The editorial content is the responsibility of the Public Affairs Office of the Multi-National Force - Iraq. Questions and comments should be directed to the editor at [MNFInewsletter@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:MNFInewsletter@iraq.centcom.mil).


**Future** from page 1

March 2003, the Coalition has had an active civil-military outreach program. The Japanese have donated more than \$400 million to the effort in the province. Other Coalition members have donated more than \$40 million.

This is in a province with just over 500,000 people, mostly gathered in the northern third of the province, around the Euphrates River. The British led in helping to refurbish or build more than 370 miles of roads in the province. The British and Japanese replaced seven major bridges.

The Japanese built three new water treatment plants and refurbished nine water purification plants. The Coalition also replaced water and sewage mains in Samawah and constructed two large pumping stations.

The Coalition built a major powerhouse, and Japanese engineers have let contracts for a 60-megawatt generator.

The Coalition refurbished 35 schools in the province, 32 primary health centers, rebuilt and stocked hospitals, and built the As Samawah Justice Building.

The projects won't end because Coalition troops leave. Plans call for replacing the main bridges over the Euphrates, building a foot-bridge over the river at Samawah and installing power lines to isolated areas.

The police at the governor's house are proud of their accomplishments. Officers said they run their own police stations and handle all "115" calls - their version of 911. Through a translator, they said they had all been trained at the police academies in Basra or in Amman, Jordan.

They said they have all the equipment they were promised and the vehicles they need. And they said they are paid in full and on time.

British and Australian troops are also proud of the accomplishments. "This really is Sleepy Hollow," said Alan Lawson, the British political adviser in the province. "But it took a lot of work to get it that way."

Vosper-Brown said the Iraqis still face tremendous challenges. "There are some very bad men in the city," he said. "They would turn back the clock if they could, but the Iraqi security forces can handle them."

**Plans announced to secure and unify Iraq**


U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jeff Lowry

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, left, with Deputy Speaker Khalid Attiya, announces his plans to unify and secure Iraq at a press conference in Baghdad Sunday. "To those who want to rebuild our country, we present an olive branch. To those who insist on killing and terrorism, we present a fist with the power of law to protect our country and people," said al-Maliki. Iraqi security forces recently took over operations in Muthanna province in southern Iraq. Japanese, British and Australian forces previously ran operations there.





## Heroes of the Week

# Snipers get fallen comrade's rifle

Story and photo by  
Cpl. Mark Sixbey  
1st Marine Division

**CAMP HABBANIYAH** — Scout snipers from the 5th Marine Regiment killed an enemy sniper during a mission near Habbaniyah, west of Fallujah, on June 16 and recovered a Marine sniper rifle lost nearly two years ago.

The rifle was used by one of four Marines of the 4th Marine Regiment who were killed on a rooftop in Ramadi on June 21, 2004.

A 5th Regiment sniper section was conducting routine observations when a spotter observed a man inside a parked car videotaping a passing patrol of Marine vehicles. The snipers saw a rifle by the man's side.

"We were in the right place at the right time," said Sgt. Kevin Homestead, a Marine serving as spotter for the sniper team that day.

The snipers radioed the passing convoy and told them they were being watched by an enemy sniper and to stay low.

The gunman was then seen preparing the weapon to fire.

A 21-year-old Marine sniper, who declined to be interviewed, aimed at the gunman and recited a sniper's mantra in his head - breathe, relax, aim, squeeze, surprise.

The enemy gunman died with the rifle in his lap.

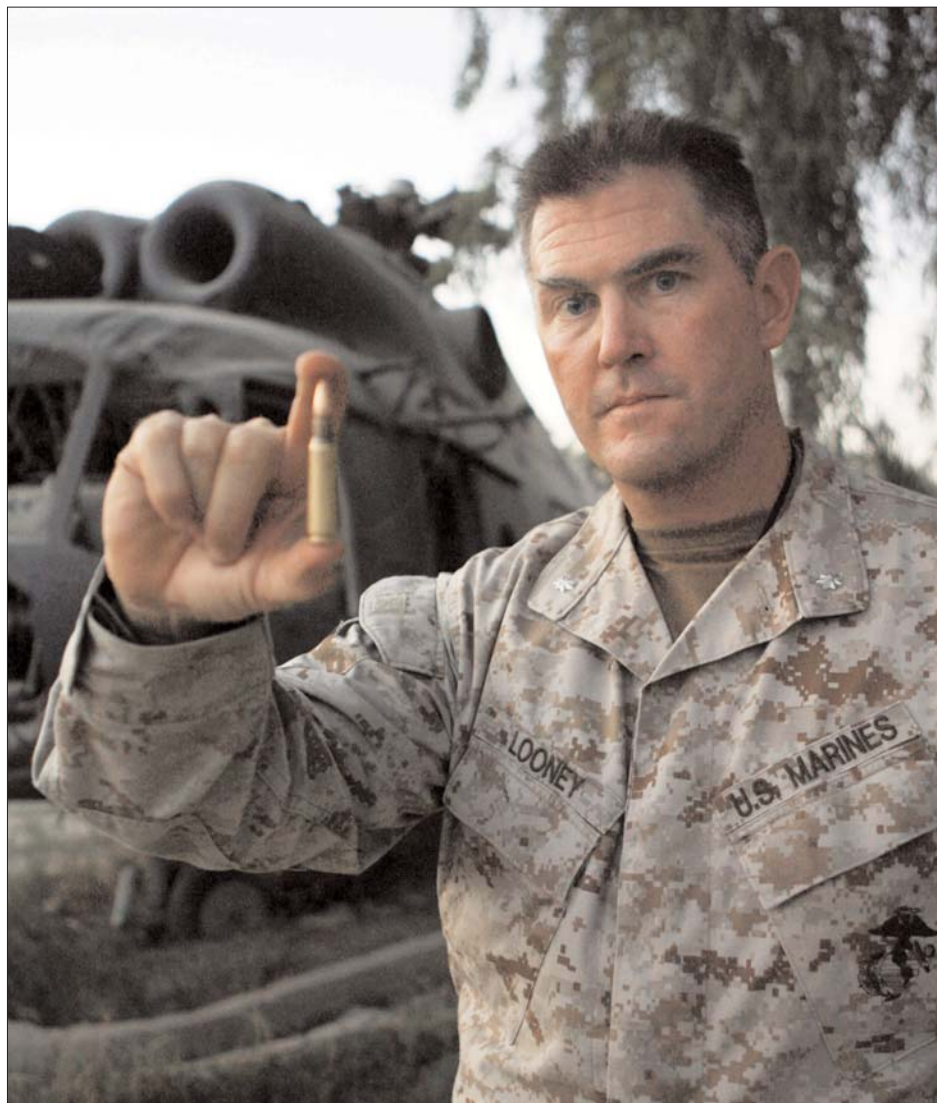
"We then saw another military-aged male... enter the passenger side door," said Homestead, 26, from Ontario, Ore.

Surprised to see the gunman killed, the second insurgent scurried around the car and jumped in the driver's seat.

With the Marine sniper now spotting for him, Homestead aimed with his rifle and fired three bullets at the car.

Another Marine squad came to the position and saw the gunman and driver dead. The Marines pulled out the rifle and immediately recognized it as the one used by one of the ill-fated snipers of the 4th Marine Regiment in 2004.

"When we saw the scope and stock, we



**Lt. Col. Patrick Looney, a battalion commander with the 5th Marine Regiment, holds the last round chambered in a Marine sniper rifle, which spent two years in enemy hands.**

knew what it was," Homestead said.

Marines believed the gunman they killed had the rifle all along.

"He was a very good sniper," Homestead said.

"But he got cocky and slipped up and it was our time to catch that."

The weapon came full circle. It originally belonged to the 5th Regiment in Operation Iraqi Freedom I, then to snipers of the 4th Marine Regiment who were killed in 2004.

"It's very rewarding to take them out the way we did ... even though it won't bring back the four Marines who were killed that day," said Lt. Col. Patrick G. Looney, a battalion commander with the 5th Marine Regiment.

The Marine snipers have since removed the powder and primer from the last round the gunman chambered in the rifle. They plan to mount it on a plaque and present it to the 4th Regiment snipers to honor their lost comrades.

# Marines: 'Show me your report card'

Story and photo by  
Sgt. Roe F. Seigle  
1st Marine Division

**BARWANA** — As Sgt. Brett Bartels stood in front of a military vehicle handing out hundreds of stuffed animals and soccer balls on a road in Barwana, his goal was simple - make sure each child went home with a smile on his face.

Such humanitarian operations are the reason many of the local residents are starting to trust Marines and why insurgents are quickly losing their foothold in the city of 40,000 nestled along the Euphrates River, just southeast of Haditha, the 23-year-old native of Canoga Park, Calif., said.

"When we arrived in Barwana in March, the insurgents would threaten and intimidate anyone who cooperated with Marines," said Bartel, a team leader with 3rd Civil Affairs Group, a Marine unit with the primary mission of assisting Iraqi communities with improving local infrastructures and governance.

"The insurgents do not have that power anymore and they are desperate to get it back," said Bartel. "It is evident in their futile attacks that rarely produce the results they want."

As the insurgency is quelled, Marines here are focusing on developing and implementing programs that will one day be turned over to Iraqi government workers in Barwana after Coalition forces withdraw from the city, said Bartels.

Many male residents have expressed an interest in becoming police officers and are willing to attend a police training camp in Baghdad, said Sgt. Jose Soto, an assistant team leader with a civil affairs group.

A police force, coupled with an Army capable of independent operations, is necessary in order to provide security to residents without the assistance of Coalition forces, said Soto.

"It is just a matter of time before people will start seeing some of the residents who are currently unemployed wearing a police uniform and protecting them from insurgents," said Soto. "The insurgency is crumbling in this city and we are winning the fight."

When the Marines arrived in Barwana



**Marine Sgt. Brett Bartels, a native of Canoga Park, Calif., hands out toys to children in a busy market place in Barwana, in western Iraq, on June 15.**

more than three months ago, residents would not communicate with them out of fear of retribution from insurgents. Now, residents are beginning to welcome Marines and Iraqi soldiers in broad daylight - a sure sign of a weakening insurgency, said Soto.

Now the Marines are reaching out to the younger generation of Iraqis with an incentive for them to focus on their education

---

**"The soccer balls were the most sought after item, so I awarded that to the children with the highest grades."**

---

through a program known as "gifts for good grades."

The program allows children to come to the base with their report cards and, depending on the quality of their grades, they are rewarded with toys and candy.

Soto came up with the program earlier this month when a child asked him for a soccer ball as he made an identification card for his parents.

"I asked him if he had a copy of his report card and he ran home and got it," said Soto. "The child made good grades in

school so I gave him a soccer ball."

The child spread the word about the gift to other neighborhood children. Soon after, many more children showed outside the forward operating base and showed their report cards to Soto in the hopes of receiving a gift.

"I would give each child at least some candy," said Soto. "The soccer balls were the most sought after item, so I awarded that to the children with the highest grades. Others would get candy or stuffed animals."

Students began asking their teachers for copies of their report cards from previous grading periods after hearing about the program, said Soto.

"Our main goal with this program is to encourage the youth to excel in their education and lead more meaningful lives instead of having to turn to the insurgency for a source of income," said Soto, after returning from a three-hour patrol in Barwana where he and Marines from Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment handed out more than two hundred toys to local children.

"People here trust us," said Bartels. "With that trust we are hoping to build the basic programs needed to properly govern a city."



# Bulgarians take security mission

Story courtesy of  
American Forces Press Service

**DIYALA PROVINCE** — Charged with providing security at the Multi-National Force - Iraq Temporary Interview and Protection Facility housing nearly 200 protected people and refugees, the First Guard Company from Kazanluk, Bulgaria,



U.S. Navy Photo by Chief Petty Officer Tony Sisti

**Bulgarian Ambassador to Iraq Valeri Ratchev speaks to Bulgarian and American soldiers on Thursday.**

received the personal congratulations of its nation's ambassador to Iraq at a formal ceremony here Thursday.

Although the Bulgarian contingent completed its training some time ago, and began its security mission at the end of April, the Soldiers elected to wait until Bulgarian Ambassador to Iraq Valeri Ratchev could join them to hold an official ceremony.

The Soldiers spent 21 days training with members of the 49th Military Police Battalion's 110th Military Police Company from Fort Hood, Texas, to prepare for their mission. "You will be fully successful and will have an important contribution to our common goals in support of the new Iraqi state and the Iraqi people," said Ratchev.

"The mission will be long and full of unforeseen situations and risks, but your destiny is to manage because you are Bulgarians, because you are here for a noble cause and because you work togeth-

er with true allies and friends."

The 49th Battalion commander noted the significance of the Bulgarian contingent's participation.

"Know that you are making history," said Army Lt. Col. Anthony Palumbo.

"We welcome you as a Coalition partner and look forward to serving with you."

The Bulgarian and American Soldiers live and work side by side and their professional relationships contribute to the successful mission.

"The biggest accomplishment is us working together and gaining experience from each other," said Pvt. Stefan Ilchev, a Bulgarian section commander.

"We have a lot in common, and our goals are the same. We're both walking on the same side of the road."

The First Guard Company will continue serving until September, when it will be relieved by Bulgaria's Second Guard Company.

## Photo of the week...



U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Larson

**Iraqi Soldiers from the 9th Iraqi Army Division conduct a dismount drill from their transport truck during a simulated attack at a training compound at Camp Taji on June 13.**

# Coalition, Iraqi raids net insurgents

Story by Sgt. Kristopher Joseph  
Multi-National Corps - Iraq

## Terrorists dead, three nabbed

Coalition forces killed 15 terrorists and caught three terrorists hiding within a group of women during back-to-back raids north of Baqouba on Tuesday.

Coalition forces came under small-arms fire from a roof during the first raid. The troops returned fire, killing nine terrorists on the roof. Two other insurgents who were firing at troops from the ground were killed by Coalition aircraft.

Coalition forces found rifles, a shotgun, a pistol and a crate of explosives at the site.

A supporting aircraft was damaged during the engagement and was forced to land. There were no injuries to the crew and ground forces immediately secured the landing site.

Three insurgents attempting to attack the downed aircraft were killed by another Coalition aircraft.

After securing the landing site, Coalition forces assaulted another building. Several terrorists had moved into that building during the first raid. A terrorist firing at troops from a roof was killed by a Coalition sniper.

The forces cleared the buildings and detained three terrorists, one wounded. The captured individuals were found hiding among nine women. None of the women were injured.

The downed aircraft was recovered, and all weapons and explosives were destroyed on-site.

## Al-Qaida in Iraq leader caught

Coalition forces caught an al-Qaida in Iraq cell leader and three associates during coordinated raids southwest of Baqouba on June 19.

The al-Qaida cell leader operated throughout central Iraq, north of Baghdad. He is known to facilitate foreign terrorists.



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jacob Bailey

**Pfc. Jordan Williams, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief from the 207th Aviation Regiment, clears his helicopter for landing after a mission near Tal Afar on Wednesday.**

Coalition forces secured multiple buildings while detaining the terrorist and his associates.

## Yusufiya raid

Coalition forces caught nine terrorists in a raid near Yusufiyah on June 18.

**“Three insurgents attempting to attack the downed aircraft were killed by another Coalition aircraft.”**

The troops targeted a Tawhid Wa'al Jihad terrorist cell.

Coalition forces quickly secured several buildings and detained the nine suspected terrorists without incident.

The terrorists had coordinated the placement of seven remote-controlled improvised explosive devices near Yusufiyah. Only one detonated, but it injured two Coalition troops.

The other six IEDs were later located and cleared by security forces without any additional injuries.

Members of the Tawhid Wa'al Jihad terrorist cell are also reported to have taken part in the May 16 attack downing a U.S. helicopter.

The Iraqi Army Division and Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers teamed up to capture suspected criminals early June 15 in an area near Scania in southern Babil province.

Iraqi Soldiers searched for terrorists in two homes near Ash Shumali while MND-B soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division provided security.

The homes were targeted based on tips from area residents and from other sources. The terrorist cell is connected with several roadside bomb attacks in May that caused the deaths of Iraqi civilians, Iraqi security and Coalition forces.

The Iraqi team searched the first house without incident and found a weapons cache with about 30 feet of detonation cord, blasting caps, a detonation system, a set of binoculars, a sniper rifle, a pistol, a rifle with full



## Operations

*from previous page*

magazine and a sword.

The homeowner was detained.

Iraqi Soldiers entered the second home without resistance and found five males. Four were sleeping on the roof at the time. Iraqi soldiers found a machine gun hidden under blankets in a storage room and a partially constructed bomb.

An Army explosive ordnance detachment removed the bomb to a safe area and conducted a controlled detonation.

Iraqi Soldiers also found a rifle with a full magazine and bomb-making materials.

All five suspects were detained.

### **Terrorists killed, caches found**

Coalition forces killed four foreign terrorists and wounded one Iraqi insurgent during a raid about 11 miles north of Fallujah on Friday.

Information from a detainee during another operation led troops to a mid-level terrorist's cell.

Troops received small-arms fire upon arriving at the target. They returned fire, killing two and wounding one insurgent. Two other insurgents fled, but Coalition forces pursued and killed them. One terrorist was wearing a 15-pound suicide belt. Another 15-pound suicide vest was found in a vehicle.

The area was known to have weapons caches, some of them rigged with explosives. The terrorists were seen earlier in the day loading weapons on trucks and moving them to secluded areas.

Following the raid, Coalition forces found rifles, ammunition magazines, mortars, grenades, a heavy machine gun, a shotgun and other automatic weapons in two buildings.

All weapons were destroyed on site and Coalition aircraft destroyed the buildings.



*Operations Review*

## Down to the wire...

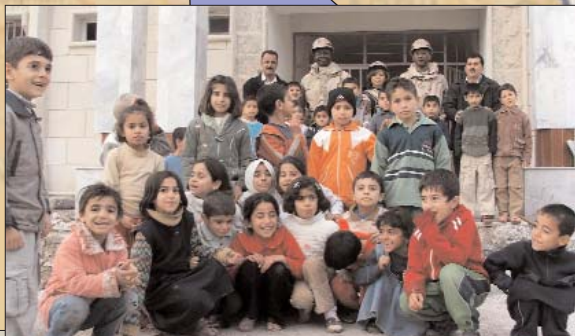


U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Larson

**Iraqi Soldiers from the 9th Iraqi Army Division pound metal stakes into the ground to hold razor wire at a training compound on Camp Taji during Iraqi Corps of Engineers training on June 13.**

# Rebuilding Iraq

Projects that are shaping a nation



## Schools provide education, jobs

Story by Polli Barnes Keller  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**MOSUL** — A new school in the center of Dahuk Province will provide a quality education for students and stable jobs for teachers.

The two-story complex has 12 classrooms to accommodate about 840 students and 36 teachers.

It has an exterior bathroom, a play yard and a generator. It is surrounded by a 10-foot high perimeter wall.

The design and material selection for the building was made by a local Iraqi engineer.

The \$460,000 project was funded by the Iraqi Relief and Reconstruction Fund and built by a local Iraqi construction company.

Of the 317 IRRF-funded school projects in the northern region of Iraq, 315 are complete and two are in progress. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provides oversight of the projects.

## Diyala Province

Al Mansoriyah village has improved electricity with about a mile of new power line.



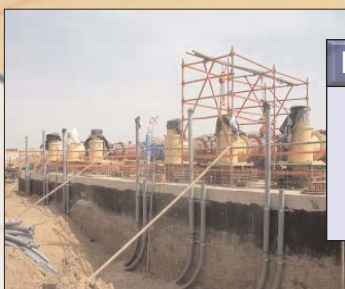
## Baghdad Province

About 30,000 Rashid neighborhood residents now have increased fire protection with the construction of two fire stations.



## Dhi Qar Province

The Nasiriya water treatment facility is nearing completion and will provide water to more than 550,000 people.





# Gen. Casey: 'Iran factor quite complex'



DoD photo by Staff Sgt. Gary Hilliard

**Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, right, and Commanding General Multi-National Force - Iraq Gen. George W. Casey Jr., conduct a Pentagon press briefing in Arlington, Va. on Thursday.**

By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — Iranian support for insurgents in Iraq has become a major factor in a "quite complex" security environment, the commander of ground forces in Iraq told Pentagon reporters Thursday.

Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr., commander of Multi-National Force - Iraq, pointed to Iranian support for Shia insurgents as a problem in what he said has become a constantly changing security environment. The environment hasn't necessarily worsened, but has increased in complexity since Iraq's December elections and the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra in February, he said.

"We are quite confident that the Iranians, through their covert special operations forces, are providing weapons, (improvised-explosive-device) technology, and training to Shia extremists groups in Iraq," Casey told reporters during a joint briefing with Defense Secretary Donald

Rumsfeld.

Casey said there's no evidence that Iranians are in Iraq actually directing attacks. "They are using surrogates to conduct terrorist operations in Iraq, both against us and against the Iraqi people," Casey said. "It is decidedly unhelpful."

The Iranians are most likely training these extremists in Iran and possibly Lebanon. "There are some indications that Lebanese Hezbollah is also used in some of the training functions for the Iranians," he said.

Meanwhile, al-Qaida continues to present security challenges in Iraq, even after terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's death, Casey said.

"Al-Qaida is hurt" through its loss of leadership as well as a steady stream of Coalition and Iraqi raids, he said. "But they are not finished. And they won't be finished for some time. They are feeling the pain right now, but as you also see, they are still capable of conducting terrorist acts across Iraq."

Illegal armed groups, a term Casey

used in lieu of "militias," also pose a security challenge. "These are criminals, and they need to be dealt with through a combination of political influence and security forces, and they will be," he said. The Iraqi government "has stepped up to the challenge" and is committed to dealing with these groups, he said. Similarly, the Iraqi government and Coalition are working together to confront another major security challenge in Iraq: the Sunni insurgency. This group "has been reaching out and looking for ways to reevaluate their options and to come out of the resistance against occupation with honor," Casey said. "And we and the Iraqi government have several different strands of contacts going on, and there are opportunities in that regard that we just haven't had before," he said.

Casey praised the Iraqis for finalizing their national unity government, which he called "probably the single most important element of the future political success in Iraq."